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ABSTRACT

The relationship under discussion was tested by quantifying the variables using a rule administration scale, the Executive Professional Leadership instrument, and a Management Behavior Scale. Hypotheses were tested using data derived from a sample of 20 superintendents, 40 principals, and 500 students. The data support the concept that a superintendent's management behavior will influence the principal's rule administration. Thus, the homogeneous management behavior and rule administration affect teacher perceptions of the principal's leadership ability. A short list of references is provided. (Author)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUPERINTENDENT'S MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE PRINCIPAL'S RULE ADMINISTRATION BEHAVIOR

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It was the purpose of this study to investigate the relationship between the superintendent's management behavior and the variables of teacher's perception of principal's leadership and the teacher's perception of the principal's rule administration behavior. This study was an extension of research findings previously reported at American Educational Research Association Conferences.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Recent emphases has been directed toward a more thorough understanding of organizational behavior by observing and studying the management behavior of incumbents who occupy positions of "influence" within the organizational structure. In reviewing the concept of influence, March (1955) and Simon (1957) have argued convincingly that influence is simply a special instance of causality; namely, the modification of one person's behavior by the action of another.

Present efforts are rooted in earilier attempts to analyze the influence relationship by focusing on the identification of "actors" and "agents" who exerted influence upon the behavior of others. The term "actor" or "agent" was earlier employed by Laswell and Kaplan (1950) to refer to specific individuals within the organization whose behavior was determined to be a reference point for organizational behavior

EA 006 042

and direction. In the analysis of influence proposed by March (1957), "roles" and the behavior of individuals who occupy these roles are the essential elements.

The present era of contemporary research includes recognition of the influence relationship as a factor of both individual and organizational behavior. Of particular significance is the observable phenomenon that the influence relationship extends and permeates throughout all levels of the management hierarchy and is manifested in the tendency for management systems within organizations to exhibit a homogeneity of management behavior.

One of the major findings of the University of Michigan over the years has been that the style of supervision exercised by first-line supervisors tended to reflect the style of supervision to which they, in turn, were subjected (Gibbs, 1960). Writers in the private sector such as McGregor (1960), Argyris (1964), and Blake and Mouton (1968), have found evidence of such homogeneity of management behavior and have further noted that higher level administrators influence the management behavior of lower level administrators. Likert (1967) recognized the tendency toward internal consistency and noted that lower and middle levels of management tend to reflect their superiors' principles and practices in their behavior.

The significance of these findings in the private sector would appear to have implications for management systems and administrative behavior within educational organizations. Building upon these findings, any investigation attempting to discern similar findings in educational organizations would logically begin with the identification of those "actors" or "agents" who occupy higher level administrative positions and whose actions would seemingly affect the behavior of others who occupy middle and lower level management positions in the educational hierarchy.

Most theories of influence have asserted that the potential of an "actor" or "agent" to exert influence arises from the possession, or control, of valued resources (Cartwright, 1965). Dahl (1957) referred to these resources as the base of an actor's power and further suggested that such resources can be used to effect the behavior of others. An

examination of the hierarchial structure of educational organizations would result in the identification of the role of the superintendent as a high level administrator who has certain valued resources at his disposal. Corey (1965) has acknowledged the superintendent to be the single most influential individual in the educational community whose actions affect the behavior of other organizational participants.

The relative position of the principal in the hierarchial setting of educational organization has also been established. Bidwell (1965) identified the principal as a key middle management position of organizational influence. Dreeben and Gross (1965) have acknowledged the principal as occupying a strategic managerial position at the middle levels of the school system bureaucracy.

There have been indications that the principal-superintendent relationship has a direct effect upon the leadership that a principal gives to his staff. With reference to the middle management position of the principal in the educational hierarchy Gross (1965) stated, "In conferences with their superior, principals may or may not be made to feel that they can talk freely about their difficulties in offering professional leadership to their staffs. . . ." This contention is further supported in this hierarchial setting by Williams (1972), who stated, "Whenever two or more persons of different rank are involved in personal interchange, the one having superior rank is in charge of the transaction." Consequently, the principal, with his hierarchial position, must consider the forces that are exerted from above his position with regard to the determination of his behavior and the subsequent impact of his behavior on lower level participants.

Attempts to recognize the influence of management behavior on other system participants in the educational setting have largely centered upon the leadership behavior of the principal and its effect upon lower level participants. Lutz (1968) operationalized the management behavior of principals as perceived by teachers with regard to the administration of rules within the school organization. Using Gouldner's (1954) typology which classified administrative behavior into three types of rule administration behavior (representative; mock; punishment-centered), it was generally substantiated that certain

patterns of principal rule administration behavior could account for the leadership climate of the school as perceived by teachers.

Recognizing the implications of the rule administration behavior of the principal, Caldwell and McDannel (1973) developed the Rule Administration Scale to quantify and measure teacher perception of the principal's rule administration behavior. Investigating the relationship between the principal's rule administration behavior and teacher's perception of the principal's professional leadership, it was found that the manner in which the elementary principal administered rules was related to his degree of professional leadership as perceived by the professional staff. A parallel study by Caldwell and Spaulding (1973) using the Rule Administration Scale generated additional hypotheses with regard to the effect of the secondary principal's rule administration behavior on staff militancy and leadership perception.

These initial studies employing the Rule Administration Scale have substantiated the notion that the principal's middle management behavior is an organizational variable that influences and is related to the behavior and perceptions of lower level participants as represented by the professional teaching staff. Consequently, the present study was a logical extension of such findings and was an attempt to examine insights into the relationships between high and middle management behavior based upon perceptual findings. To that end, the following hypotheses were based upon the previously reported tendency for management systems to exhibit homogeneity of management behavior flowing from higher to lower level management positions and, as such, defined the principal's rule administration as a function of his perception of the superintendent's management behavior:

Hypothesis #1 - The superintendent's management behavior is related to the elementary principal's rule administration behavior.

Hypothesis #2 - The superintendent's management behavior is related to the secondary principal's rule administration behavior.

Hypothesis #3 - The superintendent's management behavior and elementary principal's rule administration behavior is related to the teacher's perception of the principal's leadership.

Hypothesis #4 - The superintendent's management behavior and secondary principal's rule administration behavior is related to the teacher's perception of the principal's leadership.

THE SAMPLE

The sample utilized in this investigation consisted of superintendents, principals and teachers from twenty (20) school districts. Schools within these districts were chosen with regard to the characteristics of (1) district size, (2) history of labor relations, (3) community type, and (4) socio-economic level of the community.

The total sample included 20 superintendents, 40 principals (20 elementary and 20 secondary), and 500 teachers (250 elementary and 250 secondary).

Elementary and secondary personnel were selected to participate in order to measure varied perceptions of principal leadership at the different levels of the educational enterprise.

INSTRUMENTATION

Data for this investigation was collected by means of a three-part questionnaire: the Rule Administration Scale, the Executive Professional Leadership Scale, and a Likert-type Organizational Performance Management Systems Scale.

The Rule Administration Scales were developed by Caldwell and McDannel (1973) and Caldwell and Spaulding (1973) in order to measure the teachers' perception of the rule administration behavior of the principal with regard to teachers. These scales were developed using the Guttman scaling technique for each subscale (1) representative, (2) mock, and (3) punishment-centered and have reported the following reproducibility coefficients: Caldwell-McDannel: .913, .879, and .875, respectively; Caldwell-Spaulding: .909, .914, and .920, respectively.

The Executive Professional Leadership Scale (Gross and Herriott, 1965) was developed as a result of a national principalship study and was used to measure the teachers' perception of the leadership of the principal. This scale was produced using the Guttman scaling technique and has a reproducibility coefficient of .978.

To obtain a quantification of the superintendent's management behavior a management scale adapted from Likert's Management Behavior Scale (Likert, 1967) was developed by the authors. This scale provided a continuum of management behavior which included the four indices of: (1) Exploitive-Authoritative, (2) Benevolent-Authoritative, (3) Consultative, and (4) Participative-Group. A technique of Guttman scaling was utilized to determine an index for the Management Behavior Scale.

DESIGN

Each of the four hypotheses was tested in the null form using the Pearson product-moment correlation in order to determine if the relationship predicted was significantly different than zero. In all cases the .05 confidence level was required in order to reject the null hypothesis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Hypothesis #1 - A relationship between the superintendent's management behavior and the elementary principals' rule administration behavior was predicted. With regard to both the representative and punishment-centered rule administration behavior of the principal, no significant relationship was found with the superintendent's management behavior. However, a correlation of -0.2374 was obtained between the mock rule administration behavior of the elementary principal and closed management behavior on the part of superintendents. This correlation is significant beyond the .05 level. Therefore, with regard to mock behavior the hypothesis was confirmed. The more closed the superintendent's management behavior, the more mock rule administration behavior was exhibited by the elementary principal based upon teacher perception.

Hypothesis #2 - A relationship between the superintendent's management behavior and the rule administration behavior of the secondary school principal was predicted. No significant relationship was found between either the representative or the punishment-centered behavior of secondary school principals and the superintendent's management behavior. A correlation of -0.1954 was obtained between the mock rule administration behavior of secondary school principals and the closed management behavior of superintendents. This correlation is significant beyond the .05 level. Consequently with regard to mock behavior, hypotheses 2 was confirmed. Again, the more closed the superintendent's management behavior, the more mock rule administration behavior was exhibited by the principal.

Hypothesis #3 - A relationship between the superintendent's management behavior and elementary principals' rule administration behavior, and the teachers' perception of the principal's leadership was predicted. This hypothesis was confirmed with a multiple correlation of .4044, and is significant beyond the .05 level. The more open the superintendent's management behavior and the more representative the principal's rule administration behavior, the higher the teachers perceived the elementary principal's professional leadership capacity.

Hypothesis #4 - A relationship between the superintendent's management behavior and the secondary principals' rule administration behavior, and the teachers' perception of the principal's leadership was predicted. A multiple correlation of .4439 was obtained which is significant beyond the .05 level. Again, the more open the superintendent's management behavior and the more representative the secondary principals' rule administration behavior, the higher the teachers perceived the principal's professional leadership.

ANCILLARY FINDING

Although no relationship was predicted, an analysis was undertaken to determine if any relationship existed between the superintendent's management behavior and teacher

militancy. Using the data gathered in the present study combined with appropriate data from previous studies (Lutz and McDannel, 1973; Caldwell and Spaulding, 1973), information regarding teacher militancy was obtained by use of the Carlton Militancy Scale (1967). These previous studies regarding teacher militancy were recently conducted in the same districts involved in the present study. Consequently, it was possible to examine the relationship between the two variables.

Adapting the four indices of the superintendent's management behavior (1) Exploitive-Authoritative, (2) Benevolent-Authoritative, (3) Consultative, and (4) Participative-Group along a six-point continuum of CLOSED-OPEN behavior, it was found that in school districts where the superintendent's behavior was classified as CLOSED, a high level of teacher militancy was evidenced by the data collected using the Pearson product-moment correlation (-0.2265). Conversely, where the superintendent's management behavior was determined to be OPEN, a low level of teacher militancy was reported.

DISCUSSION

Superintendent Management Behavior and Principal Rule Administration Behavior

The major concern of both Hypotheses #1 and #2 centered on the relationship between two management levels of behavior, the superintendent and the principal. Both of these hypotheses were confirmed with regard to MOCK RULE ADMINISTRATION BEHAVIOR, suggesting that the superintendent's management behavior had its greatest effect on both the elementary and secondary school principals' mock behavior. Correlations were respectively reported as -0.2374 and -0.1954.

Classifying the superintendent's management behavior along an OPEN-CLOSED continuum, when the superintendent's management behavior was perceived as OPEN, by the principal, teachers perceived a low level of mock rule administration behavior on the part of the principal. In situations where the superintendent's management behavior was classified as CLOSED, there was a high level of principal mock rule administration behavior as perceived by teachers.

Such findings would appear to have implications for administrative-leadership behavior in our schools. Superintendents characterized by CLOSED management behavior rely on high control methods, hierarchial pressure, authority, direction and highly centralized decision-making processes as they work to achieve school goals. Such behavior is rigid and inflexible.

Superintendents who manifest CLOSED management behavior, can expect from their managerial subordinates in the middle management position of the principal, a high incidence of mock rule administration behavior as a response to such higher level management behavior. Mock rule administration behavior indicates an indifference with regard to the administration of rules and, extended further, may suggest a syndrome of principal apathy characterized additionally by lower performance goals, less favorable attitudes toward higher level management, and lower motivational potential for performance. One can readily sense the toll such a response would take on organizational performance.

Additional inferences can be drawn with regard to OPEN management behavior as exhibited by superintendents. The closer the superintendent's management behavior approaches the OPEN end of the continuum, the more closely such behavior approximates PARTICIPATIVE management behavior. Chief school administrators who adopt this perspective rely on supportive management relationships, individual initiative, and decentralized decision-making processes. Therefore, the principal in this educational management hierarchy is more likely to react to this perspective by utilizing his own particular framework with regard to the administration of rules. Extended further, the middle management level is more likely to adopt an administrative posture of action characterized by high performance goals, more favorable attitudes toward higher level management, and higher levels of motivation for performance. Again, one can sense the increases in the dimensions of school success.

Teacher Perceptions of Professional Leadership of Elementary and Secondary Principals

Hypotheses #3 and #4 were concerned with the teachers' perception of the principal's Executive Professional Leadership as a function of the relationship between the principal's rule administration behavior and the superintendent's management behavior. To determine the extent to which such a relationship exists, one must examine the perceived behavioral conditions under which the "highest" or "best" EPL scores of principals were produced. Multiple correlations provided this information.

Analysis of the data suggests that the elementary principals' leadership is perceived to be "highest" or "best" when the following principal-superintendent behavior combination is evidenced: High Principal Representative behavior (0.2779), Low Principal Punishment-centered Behavior (-0.1672), and Slightly Positive Superintendent Open Behavior (0.0710). The statistics cited above are zero order correlations between the variable indicated and the teachers' perception of the principals' EPL. Multivariate analysis produced a multiple correlation of .4044 between the elementary principals' EPL as perceived by teachers and Superintendent Management Behavior (OPEN), and Principal Rule Administration Behavior (high representative, low punishment, and relatively low mock).

With regard to the leadership of the secondary principal, it is perceived to be "highest" or "best" under the following principal-superintendent behavior combination: High Principal Representative Behavior (0.3253), Low Principal Mock Behavior (-0.2815), and Slightly Closed Superintendent Behavior (-0.1373). Multivariate analysis produced a multiple correlation of 0.4439 between the secondary principals' EPL as perceived by teachers and Superintendent Management Behavior (SLIGHTLY CLOSED), and Principal Rule Administration Behavior (high representative and low mock). By close analysis of these statistical relationships, one can see that the major effect on the perception of the principalship, but that the principal's behavior is constrained by the operational limits imposed by the superintendent's management behavior.

Superintendent Management Behavior and Teacher Militancy

The reported finding that superintendent management behavior (CLOSED-OPEN) was related to teacher militancy (HIGH-LOW) is a matter of organizational concern; yet a note of caution appears warranted. Previous investigations (McDannel, 1973; Spaulding, 1973) did not support any relationships between staff militancy and the perceived rule administration behavior of either the elementary or secondary principal. Several plausible explanations were posited for the lack of relationship.

Perhaps then, the reported relationship between superintendent behavior and staff militancy in the present study implies that the superintendent's behavior, as a higher level management position than the principal level, is more likely to serve as a focal point for staff militancy, in that the superintendent's behavior is more closely associated with district policies and actions, including collective bargaining. However, any inferences drawn from this finding are tenuous and would warrant further investigation.

Implications of Findings on Educational Organizations

Overall, the findings presented in this study tend to support the contention that higher level management behavior influences and affects the behavior of descending management levels. Superintendent behavior does influence and relate to principal behavior. However, with regard to this study, it has been noted that the influence of higher level management behavior on middle management behavior is not necessarily manifested in a tendency toward homogeneity of management behavior. On the contrary, CLOSED superintendent behavior did not result in corresponding principal rule administration behavior, but in a greater tendency for principals to be perceived as MOCK. Perhaps such a tendency reflects the distinguishing characteristics of educational organizations from other kinds of organizations.

Again, the place of REPRESENTATIVE Rule Administration behavior as a factor in high perceived professional leadership of the principal has been noted; not to the exclusion of the other patterns, but as a predominantly integrated behavior pattern.

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